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## EPA tours Billerica asbestos landfill to decide best method for capping it

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**EPA**  
BILLERICA - Inspectors for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are touring the Johns-Manville site in Iron Horse Park today to determine the best course of action to secure the asbestos landfill on that property.

The EPA accepted responsibility for temporarily capping the dump after a meeting last week between company officials and the EPA, according to EPA spokesman Richard Leighton.

Leighton said the meeting was held to consider whether the firm or the EPA should be responsible for installing the temporary cap on the landfill, which is being investigated as a Superfund hazardous waste site.

While the tone of the negotiations was "positive," Leighton said, the two sides differed significantly in their perceptions of how much work needed to be done.

"They have a general interest

in doing something out there," said Leighton. "I think we just have different ideas on the scope of work which needs to be done."

Leighton said assessment of the capping has already been assigned to staff in the EPA's Lexington division, who were to tour the site today. It will be up to those inspectors to determine what will be the best course of action for covering the landfill.

There are several small patches where cover material over the landfill has worn away and exposed asbestos to the air.

Residents of the area are alarmed that children play in the asbestos landfill and may inhale loose asbestos fibers, which can cause serious respiratory diseases.

### Pushing for action

At a meeting sponsored by the Superfund Action Committee (SAC) on May 17, SAC Chairwoman Sharon Checrallah said residents wanted the exposed patches covered as soon as possi-

ble, and the entire landfill recovered by the time school lets out for the summer.

Johns-Manville covered the landfill in 1975, but used about six inches of material, which has supported only scattered vegetation. For a long-term cover of the 15-acre site, the EPA considers two or three feet of material appropriate.

Leighton explained that winter frosts and thaws naturally push objects with some density to the surface of the ground. That action occurs every winter and over a period of time, forces any substantial clumps of asbestos to the surface.

For that reason, the EPA avoids using the term "permanent cover" since no cover can be guaranteed to contain the frost-and-thaw phenomenon.

Leighton said the Lexington division will determine this week what to do about the exposed patches.